DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 414 740 FL 024 934

AUTHOR	Portocarrero, Georgia; Bergin, Jeannine
TITLE	Developing Literacy: A Co-Teaching Model Using Readers' and Writers' Workshop.
PUB DATE	1997-00-00
NOTE	12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (31st, Orlando, FL, March 11-15, 1997).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Elementary Education; *English (Second Language); Interdisciplinary Approach; *Literacy Education; Program Descriptions; *Reading Instruction; Second Language Instruction; *Team Teaching; *Writing Instruction; *Writing Workshops
IDENTIFIERS	Montgomery County Public Schools MD

ABSTRACT

A program at Viers Mill Elementary School (Silver Spring, Maryland) to develop the literacy skills of both English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) and native English students is described. The program uses a co-teaching model, in which classroom teachers and ESL teachers collaborate by providing readers' and writers' workshops. The workshops have been extended from the initial offering in first and second grade classes to first through fifth grades. During the sixty-minute reading/language arts instructional block, students participate in workshops that include whole-group mini-lessons, a large block of independent work and conferencing time, and a whole-group sharing time. ESL and classroom teachers team-teach the mini-lessons two or three days a week; on days without mini-lessons, students are brought together to discuss the day's plans and to set individual goals to be met during the workshop. During independent work, time, teachers conference with individual students about books they are reading or about their writing. The report details the procedures of each workshop type, modifications made to the program over time, and methods used for measuring student progress. Contains 21 references. (MSE)

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Developing Literacy: A Co-Teaching Model Using Readers' and Writers' Workshop

by
Georgia Portocarrero and Jeannine Bergin
Montgomery County Public Schools
Viers Mill E.S., Silver Spring, MD

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Introduction

Traditionally, most public schools in this country have addressed the educational needs of ESOL students through pull-out instructional models. Recent emphasis on mainstreaming and on the concurrent development of ESOL students' social and academic language have motivated educators to begin to examine other instructional models. Such was the case at Viers Mill E.S. in Silver Spring, MD, in which the staff changed its instructional model from a traditional pull-out program to a co-teaching instructional model. In this model, classroom teachers and ESOL teachers collaborate to develop the literacy skills of both ESOL students and native English speakers. This paper will describe the rationale for, organization, management and advantages of a co-teaching model.

Rationale

The rationale for a co-teaching model at Viers Mill was based on a variety of factors. To better understand the rationale, it is important to look at the school's background. Viers Mill is a K-5 school with approximately 700 students, 135 of whom are enrolled in the ESOL program. Two thirds of these students come from bilingual homes. Although Spanish is the primary language of the ESOL population, over 20 languages are spoken. Viers Mill is also a Title I school in which 48% of the students receive free/reduced lunch.

In 1993, both classroom and ESOL teachers who had had experience with the traditional pull-out model, began to question its effectiveness. They were concerned about the lack of progress and enthusiasm on the part of

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ESOL students for both reading and writing. Low test scores on standardized county and state tests reflected students' lack of progress, especially in reading and writing. Teachers were frustrated by the fragmented and limited amount of time spent each day on developing these skills. They also saw a need to integrate the ESOL intermediate curriculum with the county's Reading/Language Arts curriculum in order to help students develop a common academic language related to reading strategies, literary elements, writing intents and the writing process.

These concerns, coupled with a need to increase the comfort level of classroom teachers in working with ESOL students, provided the impetus for the staff to research alternative instructional models. Because of the diversity of languages spoken by the students, it was decided that a bilingual model was not feasible. After visiting a number of schools in the surrounding counties, the ESOL teachers were most impressed with a program in Fairfax, Va, in which classroom and ESOL teachers planned and taught the Language Arts lessons together. The idea of collaboration was easily combined with the principal's and staff's desire to implement a Whole Language Reading/Language Arts program using the format of Readers'/Writers' Workshops.

Organization

As part of a school-wide commitment to improve students' literacy skills, the decision was made in the summer of 1994 to implement a co-teaching model using the format of Readers'/Writers' Workshops. Initially, the new model was piloted in two first grade and two second grade classrooms. The success of the program prompted the staff to extend it to another grade level each year. Currently, the model is implemented in three first, second, third, and fourth grade classrooms and one fifth grade classroom.

There are several important issues to address in considering the use of this model. Among the most important is scheduling. A daily, uninterrupted sixty-minute block of Reading/Language Arts time is essential to the success of the program. It should be coordinated with the Art, Music and PE schedules. Additionally, it is necessary to cluster ESOL students in groups of eight or less in classrooms participating in the co-teaching model. This allows the ESOL teacher to work with a greater number of students for a longer period of time, without having to co-teach

in every classroom at each grade level. It is also important to consider the impact of clustering on the racial and ethnic balance of each classroom. Because of the diverse student population at Viers Mill, this did not pose a major problem.

Staffing is another important issue. If the co-teaching model is implemented at several grade levels, as it is at Viers Mill, additional ESOL staffing is required. Viers Mill currently has 3.5 ESOL teachers working with 135 ESOL students. With the exception of Level 1 beginning ESOL students, who continue to be serviced in a pull-out model, all other ESOL students receive language support in their classrooms during the daily sixty- minute Reading/Language Arts block. However, it is possible to implement this model on a smaller scale by co-teaching in a single classroom or at single grade level. In this case, additional ESOL staffing may not be required. It is also helpful if classroom teachers participate voluntarily in the program.

A critical factor in the success of this model is the active participation of both ESOL and classroom teachers. During weekly planning sessions grade-level teams meet to design lessons and allocate responsibilities for the upcoming week's instruction. ESOL and classroom teachers share equally in gathering and preparing necessary materials, executing lessons and evaluating students' progress.

It should be emphasized that the co-teaching workshops do not replace the classroom teachers' guided reading instructional program. Rather, such workshops provide additional opportunities for reading and writing in an alternative format which enables ESOL teachers to integrate language instruction with the objectives of the Reading/Language Arts curriculum in the mainstream classroom. The combination of the programs gives ESOL students more time to practice and develop reading and writing skills.

Workshop Materials

Critical to the workshops' success is an extensive and varied classroom library which reflects the multicultural background of the students. Books suitable for this purpose may be purchased or be obtained from the school library and should include fiction and non fiction books at a variety of reading levels, ranging from simple patterned language books to novels. In general, the books used should reflect the objectives of grade-level curriculums.

In each classroom there should be designated areas for materials used in Readers' and Writers' Workshops such as books, reading responses, checklists, graphic organizers, revising and editing pens, and writing paper.

To help organize their work, students are given a pocket folder for each workshop. One side of the pocket folder contains tools students may need, such as brainstorm lists, a dictionary of commonly used words (Quick-words) and tips for revising and editing. In the other pocket of the folder students keep a checklist of workshop steps, along with any work in progress.

Management

During the sixty-minute Reading/Language Arts block, ESOL and classroom teachers work with students in either Readers' or Writers' Workshop. In general, students participate in Readers' Workshop two days a week and in Writers' Workshop three days a week. This routine may be modified when necessary. The Workshop format is rooted in the Whole Language approach which encourages students to self-select reading material and writing topics at their own instructional level and promotes student ownership of work.

The basic routine of both workshops includes a whole-group mini-lesson, a large block of independent work and conferencing time, and a whole-group sharing time. ESOL and classroom teachers team-teach the mini-lessons two or three times a week. On days without mini-lessons, students are brought together to discuss the day's plans and to set

individual goals to be met during the workshop. Initially, mini-lessons focus on the procedures of the workshops. Later on, in Readers' Workshop, the focus of the lessons shifts to reading strategies, literary elements and reading responses. In Writers' Workshop, mini-lessons provide instruction on writing intents and on the writing process.

During independent work time, both ESOL and classroom teachers conference with individual students about books they are reading or about their writing. The ESOL teacher is responsible primarily for conferencing with ESOL students, but also works with other students. The classroom teacher, after conferencing with native English speaking students, works with ESOL students as well. Conferences provide important opportunities for individualized direct instruction and help teachers identify and evaluate students' strengths and weaknesses. At the same time ESOL teachers can teach and reinforce pronunciation, language usage and decoding and comprehension strategies. Teachers are responsible for keeping anecdotal records of such conferences which are later used during planning meetings to guide instruction.

Occasionally it is necessary to work with students in small groups during a part of independent work time. For example, emergent or beginning readers who are unable to work independently for a long period of time, benefit from small group instruction. Students who need reinforcement of a particular skill or strategy may also be grouped for a short time to receive direct instruction. Gradually these students are encouraged to work more independently.

Readers'/Writers' Workshop Procedures

Students follow a series of steps in each workshop. These steps are prominently displayed on bulletin boards in each classroom. They remain consistent throughout grade levels. Once the students are familiar with the steps, they work at their own pace and level and individual students may be at different steps at any given time. ESOL students gain confidence and self esteem by being able to work at their own level under the same expectations as their native-English speaking peers. All students, but ESOL students in particular, feel comfortable with the consistent routine of the workshops.

Figure 1 shows the steps students follow in each workshop.

Figure 1

Readers' Workshop	Writers' Workshop
Choose a book	Make story map
Log book in Reading Log	Write rough draft
Read the book	Peer Conference
Complete Summary or Reading Response	Revise
Conference with teacher	Edit
	Layout
	Conference with teacher
	Publish

In Readers' Workshop students are encouraged to self-select appropriate books. During mini-lessons teachers read and discuss examples of good literature, which are then used to teach literary elements such as setting, characterization, problem and solution. Students also learn how to respond to what they read by writing summaries, forming opinions and supporting those opinions, identifying main ideas and retelling the sequence of events in stories. Once students have learned these skills, they choose and complete an appropriate response based on the book they've read. The response may be a journal entry, a summary, a book report or a worksheet related to a particular aspect of literature. Finally, they conference with a teacher about their response. ESOL and classroom teachers use this time to evaluate students' fluency, reading level and comprehension skills. This information is discussed and used to set individual reading goals.

In Writers' Workshop mini-lessons focus on teaching the writing process through a variety of writing intents. Students learn how to write personal narratives, biographies, and expository, procedural and persuasive pieces. They begin each writing intent with a story map or graphic organizer. This gives ESOL students a framework with which to begin, making the writing process a less daunting task. Students use the graphic organizer to write a rough draft and then discuss it with a partner during a peer conference. The format of the peer conference is based on examples from standardized state tests. The next steps involve revising and editing the rough draft. This is difficult for all students, but they are encouraged to complete these steps independently before having a teacher conference. It is during the conference that ESOL teachers are able to work with students on language usage and mechanics. The final step of publishing is the most exciting and rewarding for students. It includes creating illustrations, and writing title, dedication and author's pages.

An important aspect of both workshops is whole-group sharing time, during which students read their reading responses and published stories. Peers are encouraged to give positive feedback to authors. Published stories become part of the classroom library and are shared at Authors' Celebrations throughout the year.

Modifications

Over the years several modifications to the co-teaching model at Viers Mill E.S. have been made. Teachers learned that the workshops were more successful if introduced one at a time, rather than simultaneously. It was easier to begin with Writers' Workshop, especially in the primary grades, in which many students were emergent readers. Once the procedures were established in Writers' Workshop, Readers' Workshop was then introduced.

In fourth grade Writers' Workshop was implemented during the first semester and later combined with Readers' Workshop in the second semester. Both workshops were integrated with the science and social studies content areas. In an effort to align language instruction with grade level curriculums, teachers began using performance assessments and student-generated rubrics in Writers' Workshops.

Modifications were also made to add variety to the routine of Readers' Workshop such as the introduction of reading centers which were set up from time to time. Centers included books on tape, a read-aloud, independent reading, stories on CD roms and Reading Rainbow videos. As students progressed through the centers, not only were they exposed to books in various formats, but their enthusiasm for reading was heightened. Another modification was the practice of EEKK (Eye to Eye, Knee to Knee) sharing in which students sat in pairs and took turns reading to one another. This gave ESOL students many opportunities to practice reading aloud.

Methods for Measuring Progress

In addition to teacher observation and anecdotal records, informal reading assessments were used to measure students' progress. Students in first grade were given the Title One Concepts of Print Test and the Botel Word Recognition Inventory in the fall. The Botel Word Recognition Inventory, along with the Silvaroli Informal Reading Assessment, were administered in the spring. Students in second through fourth grade were given the Botel and Silvaroli tests in the fall, mid-year and in the spring and the Language Arts Performance Assessment in the fall and in the spring.

Results of these assessments showed that the majority of students who participated in the co-teaching model made steady progress in reading over the years, with the exception of those students identified as having learning disabilities. Reading, Writing and Language Usage scores on standardized county and state tests have improved since the model was implemented. Each year the percentage of students reading on grade level has increased, surpassing the original goal of having all second grade students reading on at least a primer level. In the spring of 1997 ninety percent of second grade students were reading on a second grade or higher level as measured by the Silvarole Informal Reading Assessment

Another important measure of the success of the program is the increase in the number of ESOL students taking the standardized county tests from which they were previously exempt By aligning the county's curriculum with the co-teaching model, ESOL students were better prepared to take these tests.

Advantages of Co-Teaching Model

There are many ways that students and staff benefit from the implementation of the co-teaching model. Most importantly, ESOL students are no longer isolated in a pull-out program, but rather are integrated into the mainstream with their peers. They are able to work under the same expectations as their English speaking classmates, but at their own level and pace, which greatly increases their self esteem. Their language instruction is integrated with the county and state Reading/Language Arts curriculum and provides them with many opportunities to develop both social and academic language. The workshop format promotes enthusiasm for reading and writing because students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning.

The large block of daily uninterrupted workshop time gives students ample time to read and write, enabling them to continuously develop and improve these skills. ESOL students in particular benefit from the model because they receive instructional support from two teachers in the classroom. Individual conferencing time provides teachers important opportunities for direct instruction in all aspects of language usage.

As they work together, ESOL and classroom teachers benefit from sharing strategies and techniques associated with their own areas of expertise. Classroom teachers also gain familiarity and confidence in working with ESOL students.

Conclusion

The co-teaching model allows ESOL students to be successful in the mainstream by facilitating the acquisition of social and academic language. ESOL students are given equal access to a learning environment that provides meaningful use of language and promotes the development of reading, writing, listening and speaking. Since the implementation of the co-teaching model at Viers Mill, students have not only demonstrated a continuous increase in academic achievement, but have aslo éxhibited a heightened enthusiasiam for reading and writing.

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